



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



VETERANS SALUTE AT THE SOUTH DAKOTA STATE FAIR

During the South Dakota State Fair, the annual "Salute to Veterans" program will be held on the Northwestern Energy Freedom Stage at 10:30 am on Thursday, August 31.

Lt. Governor Larry Rhoden, Major General (Ret) Tim Reisch and Elsie Van Beek will serve as the keynote speakers.

All veterans and military personnel will receive free gate admission on Thursday.

"Salute to Veterans" is a great program that honors and pays tribute to our veterans, active duty service members, and military families.



Salute To Veterans
Thursday, August 31, 2023 ~ 10:30 AM
NorthWestern Energy Freedom Stage

Master of Ceremonies ~ Mike Vehle

Posting of Colors

Pledge of Allegiance

National Anthem ~ Miss South Dakota Miranda O'Bryan

Opening Prayer ~ Pastor Teresa Person

Ragged Old Flag - Sherwin Linton

Speaker:

Elsie Van Beek, Elsie Honors

Major General (Retired) Timothy A. Reisch

Special Music ~ Miss South Dakota Miranda O'Bryan

Special Guest ~ Lieutenant Governor Rhoden

Chet Sorenson Veteran of the Year Award

God Bless America ~ Everyone

Retiring of the Colors

Dismissal of the Troops

God Bless America,
 Land that I love.
 Stand beside her, and guide her
 Thru the night with a light from above.
 From the mountains, to the prairies,
 To the oceans, white with foam
 God bless America, My home sweet home.



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SDDVA PARTICIPATES IN OUTREACH AT BIKE RALLY

Motorcycle engines were not the only thing revving it up at the 83rd Annual Sturgis Motor Cycle Rally. Members of the VA Black Hills Health Care System, the Dakota Regional Office of the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), and the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs partnered together to inform veterans about the expanded health care and benefits for veterans who have experienced toxic exposure. Veterans, caregivers, and survivors were able to ask questions of this comprehensive team of subject matter experts.

The Rally offers 10 Days of scenic rides, races, poker runs, concerts, entertainment, great food, the chance to renew old friendships and make new friends, and the opportunity to learn more about veterans benefits and the PACT Act.



Assisting in the booth were: Will Huffman—South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs; Rob Andresen—Dakota Regional Office VBA; Laura Parsons—VA Black Hills Health Care System Toxic Exposure Screening Navigator; and Stardust Red Bow—VA Black Hills Health Care System.

PACT ACT DASHBOARD

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs released a [PACT Act Year-In-Review Dashboard](#) showcasing the care and benefits that the VA has delivered to veterans and their survivors since the PACT Act was signed into law on Aug. 10, 2022. The VA is delivering more care and more benefits to more veterans than ever before. Key results to date include:

- Delivering benefits to veterans and their survivors: the VA has delivered more than \$1.85 billion in earned PACT Act benefits to veterans and their survivors. The VA is delivering these benefits to veterans at the fastest rate in our nation's history, processing 1.65 million total veteran claims thus far in this fiscal year (including 458,659 PACT Act claims) — 16% more year-to-date than the previous all-time record.



- Increasing veteran access to health care: Since August 10, 332,252 veterans have enrolled in VA health care — which is nearly 50,000 more enrollees than during the previous year. This includes more than 113,719 enrollees from the PACT Act population (Vietnam, Gulf War, and Post-9/11 Veterans).

- Screening veterans for toxic exposures: More than 4.1 million veterans have received free, 10-minute screenings for toxic exposures from the VA under the PACT Act — a critical step to catching and treating potentially life-threatening health conditions as early as possible.

Thanks to the largest outreach campaign in VA history, veterans and survivors are applying for their earned benefits at record rates. In this fiscal year, veterans and survivors have submitted 1.95 million total claims (including 843,448 PACT Act-specific claims) — 37% more than last year and on pace to break an all-time record. Veterans have also submitted 1.65 million “intents to file” during this fiscal year — 44% more than last year and also on pace to break an all-time record.

The PACT Act is here to stay, and veterans and survivors can apply anytime for the care and benefits they've earned. Veterans and survivors who applied (or submitted their intent to file) for PACT Act benefits by 11:59 p.m., ET, Monday, Aug. 14, 2023, will be eligible to have their benefits backdated to Aug. 10, 2022 — the day the PACT Act was signed into law. This is an extension from the original deadline of Aug. 9, 2023.

“Millions of Veterans who fought for our country are now getting health care and compensation for the conditions that followed them home from war,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “We’re proud that so many veterans and survivors have already benefited from the PACT Act, but this is just the beginning: we won’t rest until every veteran and every survivor gets the VA health care and benefits they deserve.”

The PACT Year-in-Review Dashboard can be found on the next page. The Year-in-Review Dashboard includes national and state-level data on PACT Act benefits and health care.



VA PACT ACT

FIRST YEAR IN REVIEW

AUGUST 10, 2023

YEAR ONE—ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



In this VA PACT Act Performance Dashboard, we are demonstrating our commitment to transparency by sharing with all stakeholders—internal to VA and externally—key performance metrics and data we are using to assess our success in implementing the PACT Act. This Issue of the dashboard includes the core metrics assessing VA's implementation of PACT Act since enactment. Our next regularly scheduled dashboard with the full complement of metrics will be published on Friday, Aug 18.

If you, a Veteran, family member, or survivor would like more information about the PACT Act and your VA benefits, please **start here**:



VA.GOV
ask.VA.gov



CALL
1-800-MyVA411
24/7/365



WALK-IN
VA.gov/find/locations



VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION
VA.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim



NEW HEALTH CARE & BENEFITS MAP
[Download Map Here](#)

Help spread the word—download [PACT Act Outreach Materials!](#)



The PACT Act is perhaps the largest health care and benefits expansion in VA history. In this section, we are measuring the overall impact of the PACT Act in terms of its expansion of health care and benefits.

VA IS EXPANDING CARE AND BENEFITS FOR VETERANS AND SURVIVORS

Expanding Benefits



360,249
Total PACT Act Related Claims Approved
(08/10/2022–08/05/2023)



340,754
Total Veterans/Survivors with Approved PACT Act Related Claims
(08/10/2022–08/05/2023)



422,117
Total Veterans/Survivors with Completed PACT Act Related Claims
(08/10/2022–08/05/2023)



78.5%
Approval Rate for PACT Act Related Claims
(08/10/2022–08/05/2023)



335,721
Total Veterans with Approved PACT Act Related Claims
5,038
Total Survivors with Approved PACT Act Related Claims



413,576
Total Veterans with Completed PACT Act Related Claims
8,551
Total Survivors with Completed PACT Act Related Claims

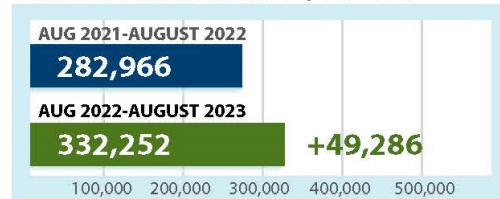
Expanding Care



113,719
New Enrollees from the PACT Act Planning Population
(10/01/2022–08/05/2023)



Total New VHA Enrollees: (through 08/05/2023)



Benefits Experience



843,448
Cumulative Total PACT Act Related Claims Submitted
(08/10/2022–08/05/2023)



458,659
Cumulative Total PACT Act Related Claims Completed
(08/10/2022–08/05/2023)

Percentage of Claims Submitted PACT Related vs. Non-PACT Related
(08/10/2022–08/05/2023)

62.7%
NON-PACT RELATED



37.3%
PACT RELATED

826,767
Total Veteran PACT Act Related Claims Submitted
16,681
Total Survivor PACT Act Related Claims Submitted

449,872
Total Veteran PACT Act Related Claims Completed
8,787
Total Survivor PACT Act Related Claims Completed

Care Experience



4,182,635
Total Toxic Exposure Screenings
(09/06/2022–08/05/2023)



1,777,506 (42.5%)
Toxic Exposure Screenings where Veterans Endorsed at least 1 Potential Exposure

348,959 (8.34%)
Toxic Exposure Screenings where Veterans Endorsed more than 1 Potential Exposure
1,428,547 (34.15%)
Toxic Exposure Screenings where Veterans Endorsed exactly 1 Potential Exposure



3,897,853
Current Enrollees in the PACT Act Planning Population (as of 08/05/2023)

64%
New Enrollees in Priority Groups 1, 2, or 3 (percentage based on the Planning Population)



REMINDER: The PACT Act is here to stay, and Veterans and survivors can apply anytime for the benefits they've earned. While there's no deadline to apply, there is urgency: the sooner you apply, the sooner you could start to receive benefits. So don't wait, apply today. Visit VA.gov/PACT to apply!

BRAIN INJURY SURVEY

The University of South Dakota Center for Disabilities, in collaboration with the South Dakota Department of Human Services, has partnered with the University of Missouri-Kansas City Institute for Human Development to learn more about the services and support needs and challenges experienced by people with brain injury in South Dakota.

The information gathered will be used to help South Dakota develop a plan to improve services and supports for people living with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) and their families. Acquired Brain Injury is any damage to the brain that happens after birth, including a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI, all ranges of severity including concussion).

Their goal is to reach as many survivors and families as possible to best identify areas of need and shape statewide initiatives in the coming years.

The survey is anonymous and veterans will not be individually identified. Participation in the survey is voluntary and you may choose not to answer any specific questions.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Eric Kurtz from the USD Center for Disabilities at Eric.Kurtz@usd.edu.

Veterans can take the survey at this link: [South Dakota Acquired Brain Injury \(ABI\) Needs Assessment Survey \(umkc.edu\)](https://umkc.edu/southdakotaabi)

AG'S URGE CONGRESS TO APPROVE G.U.A.R.D. ACT

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley has joined 43 other Attorneys General in asking Congress to approve the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (G.U.A.R.D.) Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits Act.

The legislation would hold unaccredited and unregulated actors accountable for targeting and preying upon veterans who apply for federal VA benefits. The unaccredited actors advertise their services as superior to the free services offered by accredited actors such as veteran service officers, claims agents, and attorneys.

"These unaccredited actors take advantage by gaining access to a veteran's benefits information," said Attorney General Jackley. "They are preying on our veterans and their families who have given so much for our nation."

Attorney General Jackley encourages South Dakota veterans and anyone else who believe they are victims of a fraud or scam to contact the Attorney General's Division of Consumer Protection at: consumerhelp@state.sd.us or call 1-800-300-1986 or 605-773-4400.

Joining Attorney General Jackley in submitting the letter are the Attorneys General of Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

VIETNAM VETERANS RECOGNIZED



Day County Veterans Service Officer Jeff Nelson and VSO Assistant Marcia Solberg played a role in the community outreach program honoring Vietnam Veterans in Webster.

Congressman Dusty Johnson welcomed all Vietnam Veterans home, and recognized and commemorated 34 Vietnam Veterans for their sacrifice and service.

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Field Service Officer Guy Arnold was on hand and visited with veterans about the PACT Act and VA benefits.



Day County VSO Jeff Nelson

SOUTH DAKOTA LAUNCHES “NOTES TO SELF” MARKETING CAMPAIGN

The South Dakota Department of Social Services (DSS) Division of Behavioral Health has announced the release of a new marketing campaign entitled “Notes to Self”. The campaign was developed to generate awareness and eliminate stigmas surrounding behavioral health concerns. The campaign also aims to emphasize the roles we can all take in prevention and early intervention.

“We South Dakotans tend to take pride in being ‘tough’ and ‘resilient’. However, we want people to know that they aren’t alone in whatever struggles they might be facing,” said DSS Cabinet Secretary Matt Althoff. “Our team is working tirelessly each day to help South Dakotans in need. This campaign, which gathered market research from South Dakotans, aims to reach citizens in every corner of our state and target particular demographics where suicide has been more prevalent.”

The campaign features ads across the state which will educate residents and promote resources available to help those in need. The



launch of the campaign coincided with South Dakota’s Second Annual Suicide Prevention Conference hosted by the Department of Social Services, Division of Behavioral Health, in partnership with numerous other state agencies, including the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.

The campaign includes tv, radio, and internet ads along with billboards and other efforts. These “Notes to Self” reminders focus on the existence of behavioral health needs in our communities and the resources available to all who are experiencing them.

“With this campaign, we’re encouraging South Dakotans to offer help to others through small actions, words, gestures, and acts of care,” said Jennifer Humphrey, strategic initiatives program specialist with DSS. “We are hopeful that this genuine type of outreach can work for both prevention messaging and help those who need it during times of crisis.”

Those experiencing mental-health-related distress are encouraged to call 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. 988 was launched one year ago and provides 24/7 access to trained crisis specialists.

For information about 988 and The Helpline Center, visit <https://www.helplinecenter.org/9-8-8/>.

1.800.658.3930



Military Family Assistance

What Is Military Family Assistance?

Military Family Assistance provides a focal point of information through Eight Essential Services. Family Assistance Centers are critical in providing help to all **military** families. This holds especially true for geographically dispersed families who are unable to access services at a local base, installation, or fort. In other words, Family Assistance personnel are the quick and easy way to get assistance and referrals for families.

The Eight Essential Services:

Crisis Intervention and Referral

Provide assistance with the following:

1. Danger to Self and Others
2. Child Abuse/Neglect
3. Domestic Abuse
4. Abuse/Neglect of a Vulnerable Adult

Legal Resource and Referral

1. Information on Power of Attorney/ Wills
2. Assistance with Service Members Civil Relief Act
3. Referrals for ESGR

Financial Resource and Referral

1. Understanding Military Pay
2. Help with financial education, financial assistance & loan applications

TRICARE Resource and Referral

1. Provide general information on benefits
2. Assist with TRICARE applications
3. Assist with writing appeal letters

ID Cards and DEERS

1. Provide information on DEERS Rapids Centers
2. Assist with obtaining an ID card

Community Information and Outreach

Provide array of local Community resources:

1. Assist with Child Care resource and referral
2. Assist with referral to local financial resources
3. Help find a local Family Readiness Group

Exceptional Family Member Program

1. Connect with ARNG EFMP Program
2. Assist with EFMP application

Emergency Family Assistance Center

In a State emergency:

1. Provide information, referral & outreach services
2. Help Families regain normalcy & meet needs
3. Minimize impact of the event

1.800.658.3930

Vacant

Rapid City
Lead Soldier & Family Readiness
Specialist
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Rachel Pennington

Rapid City
Soldier & Family Readiness
Specialist
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SERVICE MEMBER & FAMILY SUPPORT *SERVICES*

FAMILY PROGRAMS

Family Assistance
Family Readiness
Child & Youth
Military Funeral Honors
Survivor Outreach Services
Joint Family Support
Assistance Programs

DEPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program Reserve
Component Transition
Assistance

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
Joining Community Forces

SOLDIER & FAMILY READINESS SPECIALISTS

ASSIST COMMANDERS

- ANNUAL BRIEF
- INITIAL SFRG TRAINING, CERTIFICATION AND ONGOING SUPPORT
- BUILDING INFORMATION NETWORKS FOR UNIT FAMILIES
- PROVIDING EDUCATION TO SOLDIERS AND FAMILIES ON BENEFITS, PROGRAMS, AND RESOURCES
- PROMOTION OF RESILIENCY AND LIFE-READINESS RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS

QUESTIONS?

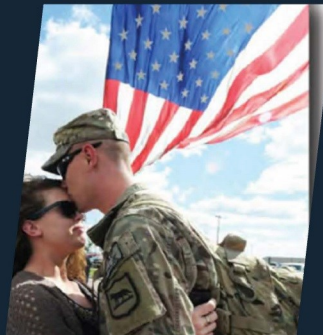
*CALL THE SFRS
TEAM!* 1-800-658-3930

SERVICE MEMBER & FAMILY SUPPORT



REFER - INFORM - SERVE - EDUCATE

1-800-658-3930





MEET OUR TEAM

Lead Soldier & Family Readiness
Specialist: Georgeann Van Delist

Soldier & Family Readiness Specialist:
Rapid City: 605-737-6079
Michele Anderson
Rachael Pennington

Mitchell: 605-995-1682
Ruth Ragels

Brookings: 605-696-5416
Bill Flippo

Sioux Falls: 605-357-2942
Paul Mausbach
Priscilla Harkin

1-800-658-3930

*Reach your Soldier & Family
Readiness Specialist here*

SERVICE MEMBER & FAMILY SUPPORT

Eight Essential Services:

The SDNG has FACs located in Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Mitchell and Brookings and offers information and referral services through the following Eight Essential Services.

- Crisis Intervention & Referral
- Legal Resources & Referral
- Financial Resource & Referral
- TRICARE Resource & Referral
- ID Cards & DEERS
- Community Information & Outreach
- Exceptional Family Member Program Information & Resources
- Emergency Family Assistance Center



DIRECTOR, SERVICE MEMBER & FAMILY SUPPORT

CHAD J. CARLSON

SERVICE MEMBER & FAMILY SUPPORT ENHANCES AND EMPOWERS THE LIVES OF OUR CUSTOMERS WITH CONSISTENTLY EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE & SUPPORT

OUR VISION

To be the most effective Service Member and Family Support in the National Guard

Essential resource to commanders

*Multiple points-of-access
Strong community partnerships
Effective outreach and communication
A rewarding place to work*

FOUR-LEGGED FRIENDS VISIT THE STATE VETERANS HOME



In an effort to keep the residents at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home entertained, Activity Director Laura Inman enlisted the help of some four legged friends, both big and small.

Horses, rabbits, and chickens made their way to the Home, bringing smiles to resident's faces.



I think we have a few new “horse whisperers!”.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Aug 19—SFVAHCS Show and Shine

Aug 25—Crow Creek Sioux Tribe Veterans Stand Down—Community Building—Fort Thompson—9:00 am (CT)

Aug 26—SD Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—LTC Gordon J. Lippman—St. Rose of Lima Community Hall—
(305 Pine Street)—Hill City—2:00 pm (MT)

Aug 27—SD Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—SP5 John P. Beckers—VFW (Main Street)—Burke—2:00 pm (CT)

Aug 28—Barrel House Day of Giving for Midwest Honor Flight

Aug 31—Veterans Day at the SD State Fair

Aug 31—Sept 4—SD State Fair

Sep 1—Wear Red Day at the State Fair—Group Photo—NWE Freedom Stage—Huron—1:30 pm (CT)

Sep 2—727th/DAV Poker Run—Dacotah Bank Center—(824 32nd Avenue)—Brookings—10:00 am (CT)

Sep 4—State Offices Closed

Sep 5—7—SDDVA Annual Benefit School—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls

Sep 8-10—PVA North Central Chapter Trap shoot—Crooks Gun Club

Sep 9—SFVAHCS Horse Outing—Rock Ranch—(461 40th Avenue)—Hills, MN—10:00 am (CT)

Sep 13-16—Black Hills Veterans March and Marathon

Sep 15—SF Area Veterans Council POW/MIA Ceremony—Veterans Memorial Park—(1021 W. Bailey)—Sioux
Falls—6:30 pm (CT)

Sep 16—SD Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—LT Peter H. Monfore—Community Hall—(605 8th Street)—
Springfield—2:00 pm (CT)

Sep 18—Texas Roadhouse Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—(Sioux Falls and Sioux City)—4:00 pm—9:00 pm (CT)

Sep 20—SD Veterans Council Meeting—VFW Post 1273—(420 N. Main Street)—Rapid City—9:00 am (MT)

Sep 26—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 16

Oct 7—SD Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—WO1 Roger S. Cameron—Community Building—(311 W. Main)—
Pierpont—2:30 pm (CT)

Oct 7—DAV Fall Conference—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls

Oct 9—State Offices Closed

Oct 10—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 17

Oct 14—SD Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—1LT Thomas M. Martin—Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell
Street)—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)

Oct 21—Elvis Night/50's Dance Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell
Street)—Sioux Falls

Nov 3—SDDVA What's Brewing Coffee and Conversation with Veterans—Black Hills State University—Joy Center—
(1351 St. Joe Street)—Spearfish—1:00 pm (MT)

Nov 4—Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair—Sturgis Community Center—11:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)

Nov 10—State Offices Closed

Nov 13—Barrel House Day of Giving for SDVC Wreaths Across America

UPCOMING EVENTS (CONTINUED)

Nov 15—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—(1519 W. 51st Street)—Sioux Falls—
9:00 am (CT)
Nov 15—South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—DAV Headquarters—(1519 W. 51st Street)—
Sioux Falls—12:00 pm (CT)
Nov 16—South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Northeast
Nov 17—South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—American Legion Post 8—(520 S. Pierre Street)—
Pierre
Nov 17—MINGO (Music Bingo) Fundraiser for Midwest Honor Flight—Severance Brewing Co.—(701 N. Phillips Ave-
nue—Suite 110)—Sioux Falls—6:00–9:00 pm (CT)
Nov 18—South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—American Legion Post 22—(818 E. St Patrick
Street)—Rapid City
Nov 23—State Offices Closed
Dec 5—Governor’s Budget Address—State Capitol—1:00 pm
Dec 16—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux
Falls—11:00 am (CT)
Dec 25—State Offices Closed

2024 Events

Jan 9—Governor’s State of the State Address—State Capitol—1:00 pm
Jan 10—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—American Legion Post 8—(520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre—
2:00 pm (CT)
Jan 10—SDDVA and South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Reception—American Legion Post 8—(520 S. Pierre
Street)—Pierre— 5:30 pm (CT)
Feb 16—18—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Deadwood
Jun 20—23—American Legion State Conference—Pierre
Dec 14—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—
11:00 am (CT)

2025 Events

Feb 14—16—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Oacoma
Jun 19—22—American Legion State Conference—Huron
Dec 13—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—
11:00 am (CT)

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
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